

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANILA 01913 121050Z

43

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 NEA-09 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAM-01 IO-10 ACDA-05 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00

FEAE-00 OPIC-03 AID-05 /094 W
----- 122350

R 120911Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 567

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 1913

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, RP, LY

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT MARCOS REVERTS TO SOFT LINE ON MUSLIMS

BEGIN SUMMARY: PRESIDENT MARCOS REVERTED TO SOFT LINE ON
MUSLIM REBELLION IN FEBM 11 SPEECH. HE APPEALED TO ARABS
AND ASEAN NEIGHBORS TO HELP ACHIEVE CEASEFIRE, PROMISED REBELS
CONTINUED AMNESTY, DENIED USE OF NAPALM BY ARMED FORCES, AND
SAID THEY HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED TO TAKE NO OFFENSIVE ACTIONM
ON LESS FORTHCOMING NOTE, PRESIDENT SAID MNLF WOULD NOT BE
GRANTED "BELLIGERENT STATUS" AND REPEATED EARLIER ASSERTIONS
THAT IT CANNOT SPEAK FOR ALL MUSLIM REBELS. AFTER NOTING
THAT LIBYA HAS OPENLY SUPPORTED REBELS, MARCOS OBSERVED
THAT PHILIPPINES TRADITIONAL FRIEND (US) IS SO
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PAGE 02 MANILA 01913 121050Z

BESET WITH PROBLEMS THAT IT CANNOT EVEN SEND AID TO VIET-

NAM OR LAOS, ADDING THAT WHAT LITTLE ARMS AID US SENDS IS "PAID FOR" BY GOP. AUTHORITATIVE TEXT NOT YET AVAILABLE; FOLLOWING BASED MAINLY ON GOP NEWS AGENCY (PNA) REPORT. ALL MANILA DAILIES CARRIED ESSENTIALLY SIMILAR VERSIONS. ENC SUMMARY.

1. IN SPEECH AT LUCENA CITY ON FEB. 11 PRESIDENT MARCOS REVERTED TO A RELATIVELY SOFT LINE ON THE MUSLIM PROBLEM, AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT. HE APPEALED FOR AID FROM ARAB COUNTRIES AND FROM ASEAN NEIGHBORS (SPECIFICALLY MENTIONING MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA) TO HELP ACHIEVE AN "IMMEDIATE CEASE-FIRE." HE SAID ARMED FORCES HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED NOT TO TAKE OFFENSIVE ACTION (REPEATING POINT MADE IN SPEECH BEFORE TOURIST GROUP ON PREVIOUS DAY) AND SAID FIELD COMMANDERS TOLD TO PREPARE FOR NEGOTIATIONS AT LOCAL LEVEL IN EVENT OF CEASEFIRE. COMMENT: WE HAVE NO CONFIRMATION THAT SUCH ORDERS HAVE BEEN GIVEN AND TEND TO DOUBT THAT THEY HAVE. END COMMENT.

2. PRESIDENT "VEHEMENTLY AND CATEGORICALLY" DENIED WIRE SERVICE REPORTS THAT NAPALM HAS BEEN USED AGAINST REBELS. ACCORDING SEVERAL VERSIONS PRESIDENT WENT FURTHER AND SAID THAT "RIGHT NOW" THERE IS NO FIGHTING AND AIR FORCE NOT BEING EMPLOYED. IN DAILY EXPRESS THIS OBSERVATION REPORTED ON SAME PAGE WITH WIRE SERVICE ACCOUNT OF TWO AMBUSHES IN COTABATO SINCE LAST SUNDAY IN WHICH 18 KILLED AND 17 WOUNDED. COMMENT: REGARDING ALLEGED NON-USE OF GROUND AIR SUPPORT, AIR FORCE DAO IS NOT AWARE OF ANY RECENT CURTAILMENT OF

GROUND AIR SUPPORT AND DOUBTS VERY MUCH THAT SUCH SUPPORT WOULD BE DENIED TO TROOPS IN COMBAT. ALTHOUGH SOME CURTAILMENT COULD CONCEIVABLY HAVE BEEN ORDERED AT LOCAL LEVEL. END COMMENT.

3. PRESIDENT REITERATED APPEAL TO MORO NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (MNLF) TO ACCEDE AMNESTY AND SAID RETURNING REBELS WOULD NOT BE JAILED OR OTHERWISE PENALIZED FOR PAST MISDEEDS. ON LESS FORTHCOMING NOTE HE REPEATED CHARGE THAT MNLF HAD VIOLATED "CEASEFIRE" AGREEMENT BY LAUNCHING ATTACKS WHILE JIDDA TALKS WERE IN PROGRESS. HE SAID THAT GOP HAD NO INTENTION OF RECOGNIZING "BELLIGERENCY STATUS" CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MANILA 01913 121050Z

OF MNLF WHICH IN ANY CASE COULD NOT SPEAK FOR OTHER MUSLIM REBEL GROUPS. GOVERNMENT, HE SAID, MUST NEGOTIATE WITH "ALL REBEL GROUPS IN THE SOUTH" AND NOT JUST THE MNLF. (COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO OTHER SIGNIFICANT MUSLIM REBEL ORGANIZATION, AS IMPLIED BY PRESIDENT, MNLF IS FACTIONALIZED AND HAD ATTRACTED BANDIT ELEMENTS. END COMMENT).

4. TURNING TO ARABS, MARCOS SAID LIBYA HAD "OPENLY ADMITTED"

AIDING SECESSIONIST MOVEMENT. HE NOTED THAT EN ITY FROM OIL PRODUCERS WOULD RESULT IN "BLEAK ECONOMIC FUTURE" FOR PHILIPPINES, BUT SAID THERE IS NO REASON FOR ARAB-PHILIPPINE ENMITY BECAUSE FILIPINOS CONSIDER MUSLIMS IN SOUTH THEIR BROTHERS AND (ACCORDING PNA) "MANY OF US HERE ARE DESCENDED FROM FAMILIES THAT WERE MUSLIMS AND CAME FROM THE SOUTH."

5. ACCORDING PNA VERSION MARCOS SAID THAT PHILIPPINES TRADITIONAL FRIEND, US, IS SO BESET WITH ITS OWN PROBLEMS THAT IT CANNOT EVEN SEND AID TO LAOS OR VIETNAM. WHAT LITTLE HELP US SENDS PHILIPPINES, HE SAID, IS IN FORM OF ARMS AND THESE ARE PAID FOR BY THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT.

6. COMMENT: MARCOS IS CLEARLY ATTEMPTING TO EXPLAIN TO PHILIPPINE PEOPLE WHY SITUATION IN SOUTH HAD BEEN GOING BADLY (I.E., BECAUSE OF REBEL INTRANSIGENCE, EXTERNAL SUPPORT) AND WHY IT CAN'T BE EXPECTED TO IMPROVE IN A HURRY (I.E., BECAUSE US IS IN NO POSITION TO INCREASE AID.) AS SAME TIME HE IS SIGNALLING TO KEY FOREIGN AUDIENCES THAT (DESPITE WIDELY REPORTED INCREASE IN FIGHTING) HE IS MAINTAINING POLICY OF AMNESTY AND NEGOTIATION AND STILL WANTS THEIR HELP.

7. RENEWED EMPHASIS ON AMNESTY AND NEGOTIATION IS AN IMPROVEMENT OVER TOUGH OFFICIAL PRONOUNCEMENTS WHICH FOLLOWED FAILURE OF JIDDA TALKS AND THOROUGHLY ALARMED MUSLIMS INCLUDING THOSE LOYAL TO GOVERNMENT. NEVERTHELESS, GIVEN ALREADY LOW CREDIBILITY OF MARCOS ON THIS TOPIC AND RATHER OBVIOUS FACTUAL UNTRUTHS CONTAINED IN THIS SPEECH, IT WILL TAKE A CONSISTENT AND EXTENDED EFFORT ON GOP'S PART TO MAKE THE NEW LINE STICK.

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PAGE 04 MANILA 01913 121050Z

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